

**SACRAMENTO COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH BOARD  
RESPONSE TO  
THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY'S  
MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT - LATE DRAFT FOR  
THE COMMUNITY SERVICES & SUPPORTS THREE-YEAR  
PROGRAM AND EXPENDITURE PLAN**

**BACKGROUND:**

During the March to January 2006 time period, many people within Sacramento County voluntarily served on Stakeholder, Task Force, and Steering Committees to assist with meeting the requirements as established in the Mental Health Service Act (MHSA). The Steering Committee evaluated **143** proposals to determine which proposals would best fulfill Sacramento County residents' mental health needs. These proposals would be implemented in 2005-08. After the Steering Committee had determined their rankings of these proposals, the Division of Mental Health (DMH) analyzed which proposals could best be implemented given the available funding from the MHSA (an anticipated initial allocation amount of \$9.62 million of which only \$8.22 million would actually be available for funding these proposals).

On October 31, 2005, the DMH released an initial MHSA draft plan for public review and comment. In this initial draft, considering the limited available funds, 6 proposals to meet county mental health needs were recommended for funding. There was also an addendum that described a Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT). This addendum was for review and comment only. (The initial cost estimate for funding PERT was over \$3.5M. This dollar amount comprised 42% of the total MHSA funds available for proposals and was therefore not acceptable.)

In December 2005, the DMH presented a revised MHSA draft to the general public and to the members of the Sacramento County Mental Health Board (SCMHB). This revised draft plan now included a modified PERT proposal at an estimated cost to MHSA funds of about \$1.32M. Therefore, it was necessary to recover funds for the PERT from proposals that were included in the initial draft plan of Oct 2005. This revised draft plan still only had **6** recommended proposals. These circumstances illustrate that county mental health needs far exceed revenues and that Mental Health is seriously under funded. (Understandably many people who devoted significant time, often on a volunteer basis, to developing the **137** unfunded proposals were greatly disappointed.)

The SCMHB conducted a Public Hearing on December 7, 2005 to hear public comments on the draft plan that included six proposals. After substantive review and consideration of all public comments received at the hearing and during the 30 day review period (both verbal and written), the SCMHB is presenting this response to the Division of Mental Health's MHSA proposed plan.

## **SCMHB FINDINGS:**

- 1. The SCMHB believes that all 6 of the proposals submitted in the final draft plan should be approved and funded. However, the board recommends that the \$500,000 from MHSA included in the PERT proposal for funding law enforcement salaries should not be funded with MHSA dollars.**
- 2. The SCMHB recommends that \$500,000 targeted for law enforcement salaries within the current PERT proposal be used to fund mental health services. It is also recommended that DMH give careful consideration to the feasibility of using this \$500,000 to restore programs or services that were eliminated from the original draft plan. When the PERT proposal was added.**
- 3. THE SCMHB notes that the DMH has worked diligently and has presented a draft plan for MHSA that is fully aligned with the most important mental health needs identified by mental health consumers, families, service providers and other interested parties of the public.**
- 4. The SCMHB also notes that the DMH revisions to the draft plan made in response to public input during the 30 public review period are important and commendable. The DMH revision of the draft plan 1) incorporates a clearer emphasis on addressing the alcohol and other drug needs of mental health consumers and 2) emphasizes giving greater attention to the full range of diversity in Sacramento County. These revisions to the plan will make services more effective.**

## **Discussion and rationale for the recommendations**

A majority of the Public Hearing (held on December 7, 2005) testimony covered two proposals - the Asian-Pacific Islander (API) Transcultural Center and the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT). There were a significant number of supporters for the API Transcultural Center. There was both support and opposition testimony pertaining to PERT.

Having reviewed all the various comments submitted to the SCMHB and the testimony from the Public Hearing, we have concluded that most people (from both the mental health and larger public) support the concept of PERT. Controversy exists on how it should be funded. The proposed use of MHSA funds to fund law enforcement personnel was the main point of contention by most of those opposed to PERT. It should be noted that there was substantial comment from a wide variety of citizens (outside mental health or law enforcement) who determined that the PERT idea would be of substantial benefit to the general public. The SCMHB has long supported the concept of PERT as evidenced by the July 2000 "Report of the Third Ad Hoc Subcommittee of the Oversight Committee of the Mental Health Board" which stated that the committee voted unanimously for PERT to be one of the two top priority new programs to be funded out of Mental Health Trust Fund dollars. The SCMHB continues to believe the PERT concept is a transformative one that can truly serve the mental health needs of consumers and benefit the entire Sacramento County community. The SCMHB supports the use of \$709,903 funds from MHSA funds to pay for mental health personnel delivering mental health services provided by a psychiatric emergency response team. However, SCMHB strongly recommends against using \$500,000 of MHSA dollars to fund law enforcement salaries

The SCMHB recommends that this \$500,000 come from other funding sources such as the Sacramento County general fund and should not reduce the limited funding available for other proposals that, without dispute, incur legitimate mental health costs. This recommendation to find other funds for law enforcement salaries seems especially important since so few of many meritorious proposals for meeting unmet mental health needs in the county could be funded with these new or existing sources of revenue.

Further support for the recommendation to use funding sources other than MHSA dollars for law enforcement salaries is found when the funding structure for other PERT teams in the state is examined. The Los Angeles' Psychiatric Mobile Response Team and San Diego's PERT have been very successfully in place and operational for many years. In both counties, when a PERT team provided assistance in mental health situations, statistics have shown a cost savings to the public, especially in a first response situation. Results usually have determined that a first response is more effective and efficient than a second response. According to the mental health representatives from both of those counties, law enforcement personnel are paid for with law enforcement monies and no monies come from mental health sources for these salaries. It is also noted that the State Department of Mental Health has determined that MHSA funds cannot fund Law Enforcement in a first response role. Law Enforcement paying for their own personnel makes complete sense since MH is only helping Law Enforcement do what they are presently doing, but in a more efficient manner and with better outcomes. MH does benefit from better outcomes; therefore MH should fund the mental health portion of costs.

In summary, the Sacramento County Mental Health Board believes that all Sacramento County residents can greatly benefit from the PERT proposal, and that the \$709,903 from the MHSA should be used to fund the mental health portion of the PERT teams for mental health services. Law enforcement funding or other sources of county funding should be used for law enforcement salaries. The SCMHB supports approval of all other portions of the plan